

What Is Claimed Is:

1. A system for placing orders for items, comprising a database having various masters, and a server for controlling data communications with a plurality of terminals via a network, and extracting or storing data to or from the various masters in response to requests from the terminals;
 - 5 wherein the database comprises:
 - a merchandise master in which is registered information relating to items provided from a dealer to a customer, for each unique item number for the respective items; and
- 10 10 an MD related master in which is registered, as merchandise assortment (MD) related information, a list of traded items, whose trades have been agreed upon beforehand between that customer and dealer, among those items stored in that merchandise master, for each purchase unit of the customer and for each dealer providing
- 15 the items to that customer; and
 - wherein the server comprises an item replacing controller for, when an item stored in the merchandise master is to be replaced with an item that is a replaceable item but is not contained in the MD related information, controlling the replacement of items
- 20 20 provided to the dealers from the customers, according to an automatic replace level defined beforehand in the MD related information.
2. The system according to claim 1, wherein the item replacement controller comprises a price balance oriented determining function, and that function determines whether or not to automatically implement a replacement in the MD related information, according
- 5 5 to the automatic replace level, and to price difference between price of new item and price of old item, that being price to customer from dealer.
3. The system according to claim 1, wherein the item replacement controller comprises a price form oriented determining function, and that function determines whether or not to automatically implement a replacement in the MD related information, according

5 to difference of whether item price specifying form from the dealer to customer is a negotiated ratio for an item group or a negotiated price for an individual item, and to the automatic replace level.

4. The system according to claim 1, wherein the server comprises an item replacing unit for, when an order for an item for which a new item number has been defined in the MD related information by the item replacement controller is placed from a terminal used 5 by a user belonging to the purchasing unit, making item replaced in that new item number object of order placement.

5. The system according to claim 1, wherein the item replacement controller comprises a deliverer specific out of production controlling function, and

5 wherein said function, when the old item has been taken out of production by the supplier, specifies a deliverer for delivering that item to be taken out of production to a customer, with reference to the MD related information; and

10 that item is logically deleted from the MD related information when that deliverer is not a dealer; and, when that deliverer is a dealer, prompts user of that dealer to reflect that out of production item in MD related information.

6. The system according to claim 1, wherein the item replacement controller comprises:

a new item storing function for, when an item replacement has been designated by the customer in response to a proposal to adopt

5 a new product made to that customer, storing new item number designated by that customer in old MD data of MD related information used between that customer and the dealer; and

a new MD data storing function for storing new MD data for a new item number in the MD related information.

7. The system according to claim 6, wherein the item replacement controller comprises a duplication error output function, and that function outputs a duplication error, when the new item number is stored by the new item storing function in the MD related information, 5 when dealers for same customer are redundant for that item number.

8. A system for placing orders for items, comprising a database having various masters, and a server for controlling data communications with a plurality of terminals via a network, and extracting or storing data to or from the various masters in response to requests from the terminals;

wherein the database comprises a merchandise master in which is registered information relating to items provided to a customer by item numbers unique to those items; and

wherein the server comprises an item replacement controller for, when an item stored in the merchandise master is to be replaced with a replaceable item, controls replacement of item provided to the customer according to automatic replace level defined beforehand for each of the customers.

9. A method for controlling item replacement using an order placing system, said order placing system comprising a database wherein are stored various masters, and a server for controlling data communications with a plurality of terminals via a network,

and extracting or storing data to or from the various masters in response to requests from the terminals;

wherein the database comprises:

a merchandise master in which is registered information relating to items such as goods or services provided from a supplier through a retail outlet or other dealer to a customer, for each unique item number for those items; and

an MD related master in which is registered a list of traded items whose trades have been agreed upon beforehand between that customer and dealer, among those items stored in that merchandise master, as MD related information, for each purchase unit of the customer, for each dealer providing the items; and

the replacement control method comprises the steps of:

(a) specifying beforehand a replacement form, when an item among items provided from the dealer to a customer is to be replaced by a new item, as an automatic replace level, for each set of MD related information wherein unit thereof is made a list of those

items handled;

(b) referencing a certain automatic replace level, when a proposal for adopting a new product or the like has been made to
25 the customer by a sales activity entity such as a supplier or dealer or the like, namely the automatic replace level defined in MD related information for that customer;

30 (c) defining a form for determining price of old item, based on the MD related information, before or after step (b);

(d) calculating price difference between price of old item and price of new item, when price of that new item can be calculated, based on price determining form specified in step (c); and

35 (e) determining whether or not to implement item replacement, or whether or not a query is to be made to the dealer, according to combination of whether or not a price calculation was made in step (d), that price difference when such was calculated, and the automatic replace level.

10. The method according to claim 9, wherein the item replacement enable/disable step in (e) determines whether or not to implement item replacement based on price difference calculated in the price difference calculation step in (d) when the automatic replace level
5 is level where most automatic determination is made.

11. The method according to claim 9, wherein the item replacement enable/disable step in (e) prompts negotiation between the customer and the dealer concerning whether or not to perform the item replacement according to the price difference calculated in the
5 price difference calculation step in (d), when the automatic replace level is level where most automatic determination is made.

12. A Computer program product comprising a recording medium storing a program for controlling item replacement using an order placing system;

5 wherein the order placing system comprises a database which stores various masters, and a server for controlling data communications with a plurality of terminals via a network, and extracting or storing data to or from the various masters in response

to requests from the terminals;

the database comprises:

10 a merchandise master in which is registered information relating to items provided from a dealer to a customer, for each unique item number for the items; and

an MD related master in which is registered a list of traded items whose trades have been agreed upon beforehand between that 15 customer and dealer, among those items stored in that merchandise master, as MD related information for each purchase unit of the customer, and for each dealer providing the items to that customer; and

20 wherein the program for item replacement control causes the server to:

specify a replacement form, when an item among handled items provided from the dealer to a customer is to be replaced by a new item, as an automatic replace level, for each set of MD related information in which unit thereof is made a list of those items 25 handled;

reference the automatic replace level defined in MD related information for that customer, when a proposal for adopting a new product or the like has been made to the customer by a sales activity entity for the customer such as supplier or dealer or the like;

30 reference MD related information and specify a form for determining price of old item;

calculate price difference between price of old item and price of new item, when price of that new item can be calculated, based on specified price determining form; and

35 determine whether or not to implement item replacement, or whether or not a query is to be made to the dealer, according to combination of whether or not a price calculation was made, that price difference when such was calculated, and the automatic replace level.

13. A system for placing orders for items, comprising a database wherein are stored various masters, and a server for controlling

data communications with a plurality of terminals via a network, and extracting or storing data to or from the various masters in
5 response to requests from the terminals;

wherein the database comprises:

a merchandise master in which is registered information relating to items provided from a dealer to a customer, for each unique item number for the items;

10 an MD related master which a list of traded items whose trades have been agreed upon beforehand between that customer and dealer, among those items stored in that merchandise master, as MD related information. for each purchase unit of the customer and for each dealer providing the items to that customer;

15 an item replacement master for managing the replacement of item numbers, item by item, proposed by a sales activity entity for the customer such as a supplier or dealer of items provided to the customer; and

20 an item replacement judgment master for managing condition of advance of item replacements stored in that item replacement master; and

wherein the server comprises:

25 an automatic replace level storage controller for storing an automatic replace level determined beforehand between that customer and dealer in the MD related information when the MD related information is stored in the MD related master;

30 an item specific item replacement storage controller which, when replacement of an item stored in the merchandise master is proposed by the sales activity entity, stores the old item number of that item replacement and a new item number that is a new item in the item replacement master;

35 a replacement object extraction controller which, after the old and new item numbers have been stored in the item replacement master, extracts the MD related information in which that old item number is assorted from the MD related information;

an MD specific item replacement determinator for determining

whether or not to automatically implement an item replacement, for each set of MD related information, based on automatic replacement implementation level stored in the MD related information extracted

40 by that replacement object extraction controller;

an automatic replacement controller which, when it has been determined by that MD specific item replacement determinator to perform an item replacement automatically, stores the new item number in the MD data specified by the old item number in plurality 45 of sets of MD data in that MD related information; and

a replacement study controller which, when it has been determined by the MD specific item replacement determinator not to perform an automatic item replacement, prompts the dealer corresponding to that MD related information to store information 50 relating to that item replacement.

14. The system according to claim 13, wherein automatic replace level defined in each of the sets of MD related information is one or other of a verification scheme level, intermediate scheme level, and automatic scheme level;

5 the verification scheme level is an automatic replace level that automatically performs replacement when there is no change in prices to the customer between old and new items, and prompts dealer managing that MD related information to input a price when price of the new item is higher or lower than the price of the old 10 item;

the intermediate scheme level is an automatic replace level that, when there is a rate and an actual amount as schemes for determining prices to the customer, performs automatic replacement irrespective of the price difference between the old and new items

15 when that determining scheme is a rate, but urges deal managing that MD related information to input a price when price of the new item is higher or lower than price of the old item; the automatic scheme level is an automatic replace level that determines whether or not to perform item replacement according to classifications 20 determined beforehand according to price difference between old

- and new items, irrespective of scheme for determining price to the customer, without requiring the dealer to input a price; and
- the MD specific item replacement controller comprises:
- an automatic replace level specific determining function for
- 25 determining whether or not to implement item replacement according to the automatic replace level scheme; and
- a price input control function for prompting the dealer to store information relating to that item replacement when it has been determined by that automatic replace level determining function
- 30 that storage and the like of a price by that dealer are necessary.
15. A system that places orders for items, comprising a database wherein are stored various masters, and a server for controlling data communications with a plurality of terminals via a network, and extracting or storing data to or from the various masters in
- 5 response to requests from the terminals;
- wherein the database comprises:
- a merchandise master in which is registered information relating to items provided from a dealer to a customer, for each unique item number for the items; and
- 10 an MD related master in which is registered a list of traded items whose trades have been agreed upon beforehand between that customer and dealer, among those items stored in that merchandise master, as MD related information for each purchase unit of the customer and for each dealer providing the items to that customer;
- 15 and
- the server comprises:
- a received order item replacing controller that, when an order placement request for ordering an item is received from a terminal used by a user belonging to the purchasing unit, references the
- 20 MD related information, and, when a new item number is stored in that item, notifies user for receiving order for item of that new item number; and
- an out of production item order changing controller for, when the MD related information is referenced and the item number for

25 which the order placement request was received has gone out of production, prompting the user to change or cancel the order placed for that item.

16. Order placement data used in a system that controls order placing and receiving between a customer to whom a user using a terminal belongs and a dealer providing items such as goods or services to that customer, wherein

5 the order placing and receiving system comprises:

a database storing various masters; and

a server for controlling data communications with a plurality of terminals via a network, and extracting or storing data to or from the various masters in response to requests from the terminals;

10 the order placing and receiving system data are used by the order placing and receiving system for specifying a dealer handling an item ordered by a user; and

the order placement data comprise:

a data structure consisting of MD related master data;

15 a data structure consisting of MD unit master data; and
a data structure consisting of MD master data;

the MD related master data have:

an MD unit master wherein is stored an MD unit data group indicating an MD list defined for the dealer and each of the purchasing

20 units of the customer; and

an MD master wherein is stored an MD data group wherein is stored information relating to distribution of items belonging to the MD unit in each of those MD units;

25 the MD master data have an automatic replace level for specifying a replacement form when performing a replacement of an item stored in the merchandise master in each of those MD units by an item that is a replaceable item and that is not contained in the MD related information; and

30 the MD related master data have new item number data in that item number belonging to that MD related information when item replacement has been performed for an item according to the automatic

replace level.

17. A system for placing orders for items, comprising a database storing various masters; and a server that is connected via a network to a customer terminal for a customer and a dealer terminal for a dealer, for controlling data communications with those terminals, 5 and extracting or storing data to or from the various masters in response to requests from the terminals;

wherein the database comprises:

a merchandise master in which is registered information relating to items supplied from a supplier through the dealer to 10 a customer, for each unique item number for those items; and an MD related master in which is registered a list of traded items whose trades have been agreed upon beforehand between that customer and dealer, among those items stored in that merchandise master, as MD related information, for each purchase unit of the 15 customer and for each dealer providing the items to that customer; and

the server comprises:

a free form order controller which, when an order is placed from a particular customer terminal for an item not stored in MD 20 related information oriented toward that customer or the one or plurality of dealers, controls an order placement or estimate request in a free form to a dealer group having MD related information oriented toward that customer; and

a dealer specifying controller for prompting the customer to 25 specify a dealer to provide that customer with an item for which an order was placed or is scheduled to be placed by that free form order controller, from the plurality of dealer groups.

18. The system according to claim 17, wherein the server comprises a free-form communications controller for controlling 5 communications between a dealer terminal specified by the dealer specifying controller and a customer terminal that places an order for an item by the free form order controller, and requests input of a data item roughly same as data item stored in the MD related

information to the customer terminal or dealer terminal, in response to type of that data item, by those communications.

19. The system according to claim 18, wherein the free form communications controller comprises an expense item input control function for prompting input of expense item for the item for which that free form order placement was made to the customer terminal.

20. The system according to claim 17, wherein the database comprises purchasing unit specific free form order enable/disable data for specifying whether or not operation of the free form order controller is enabled for the customer or each purchasing unit of

5 that customer.

21. The system according to claim 17, wherein the database comprises user specific free form order enable/disable data for specifying whether or not operation of the free form order controller is enabled for each user belonging to a purchasing unit of the

5 customer.

22. The system according to claim 17, wherein the database comprises dealer specific free form order capable item group data for specifying item category or item group for which free form order placement is possible on dealer end.

23. The system according to claim 17, wherein the MD related information comprises a free form conforming order control flag for prompting a free form conforming order placement that conforms with free form for items that change individually for every order

5 placement and receipt in terms of particulars and price of the item.

24. The system according to claim 17, wherein the server comprises a free form order content storage controller for, after order placement by the free form order controller has become definite, controls storing of particulars of that order in the MD related

5 information.

25. A dealer application service provider system for providing order placement functions to terminals of one or a plurality of users belonging to a purchasing unit of a customer, and providing order receiving functions to terminals of a plurality of dealers

5 providing items identified by item number to that customer, comprising a database which stores various masters such as a merchandise master in which is registered information relating to items that are goods or services; and a server, connected to terminals via a network such as Internet, for controlling sending and receiving 10 of data with those terminals, and extracting or storing data from or to the various masters in response to requests at those terminals; wherein the server comprises, as functions to be provided to a terminal used by the dealer:

15 an order receiving control function that, when an order has been placed for one or a plurality of items from the customer terminal, for each item, makes an item stored in MD related information for that customer of that dealer an order received by that dealer;

20 a delivery control function that controls arrangements for transferring one or plurality of items for which order was received by the order receiving control function, based on data stored beforehand in the MD related information;

25 a sales management control function for controlling accounting of sales by that dealer to that customer in response to the arrangements made by that delivery control function; and

26. The system according to claim 25, wherein the server further comprises, as a function to be provided to a terminal used by the dealer, an item replacement control function that, when replacements are made of items stored in the merchandise master by items that 5 are replaceable items and that are contained in the MD related information, controls replacement of items provided from the dealer to the customers according to automatic replace level defined beforehand in the MD related information.

27. The system according to claim 25, wherein the server further comprises, as a function to be provided to a terminal used by the dealer, a free form order control function that, for items not stored

in MD related information oriented toward the customer, receives
5 order for an item ordered in free form from that customer terminal.
28. The system according to claim 25, wherein the database
comprises an invoice payment condition master that, using an invoice
recipient predetermined for a user belonging to a purchasing unit
of a customer and an invoice originator predetermined by the dealer
5 as keys, specifies the invoice payment conditions determined
beforehand between that invoice recipient and invoice originator;
and,

the server further comprises, as a function to be provided
to a terminal used by the dealer, an invoice related data generating
10 function that references the invoice payment conditions, references
that predetermined closing day and invoice criteria such as delivery
to customer or acceptance by customer, and generates data relating
to invoices from dealer to customer for one or a plurality of orders
placed and received.

29. A dealer application service provider system for providing
order placement functions to terminals of one or a plurality of
users belonging to a purchasing unit of a customer, and providing
order receiving functions to terminals of a plurality of dealers
5 providing items identified by item number to that customer,
comprising a database which stores various masters such as a
merchandise master in which is registered information relating to
items that are goods or services; and a server, connected to terminals
via a network such as Internet, for controlling sending and receiving
10 of data with those terminals, and extracting or storing data from
or to the various masters in response to requests at those terminals;
wherein the server comprises, as functions to be provided to
a terminal used by the dealer:

an MD related information storing function that stores, for
15 each purchasing unit to which a user of a customer belongs, a list
of items provided to that purchasing unit, as MD related information,
for each purchasing unit of that customer;

an order receiving control function that, when an order has

been placed for one or a plurality of items from the customer terminal,
20 for each item, makes an item stored in the MD related information
for a purchasing unit of that customer of that dealer an order received
by that dealer; and

an out of production effect retrieval function that, in cases
where an item stored in the merchandise master has been taken out
25 of production, retrieves the MD related information wherein that
item is defined from the database.

30. The system according to claim 29, wherein the server further
comprises, as a function to be provided to a terminal used by the
dealer, an item replacement control function that reflects an item
replacement that changes the item going out of production to another
5 item in the MD related information of each purchasing unit of the
customer.